

# Hurricane Middle School 395 North 200 West Hurricane, Utah 84737

**April 2-3, 2008** 



Utah State Office of Education 250 East 500 South P.O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

# THE REPORT OF THE VISITING TEAM REVIEWING

# Hurricane Middle School 395 North 200 West Hurricane, UT 84737

**April 2-3, 2008** 

### **UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

# DIVISION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

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Salt Lake City, Utah

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#### **FOREWORD**

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, April 2-3, 2008, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Hurricane Middle School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Richard Holmes is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Hurricane Middle School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Hurricane Middle School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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7/25/2007

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Lyle Cox	Human Resource Director

# HURRICANE MIDDLE SCHOOL

## ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

## **School Administration**

School Administration				
Richard S. Holmes	Principal			
Jan Goodwin Assistant Principa				
Counseling				
Kevin Simmons.	Counselor			
Stefnee McMullin				
Sterilee Welviumi	Counselor			
Support Staff				
LylaTuttle	Registrar			
Jody Ballard				
Corry Stout				
Gene Hendrix				
Peggy Koziel				
Rosetta Gurule				
Pam Johnson	Food Service Worker			
	vford Food Service Worker			
April Meyers				
Katrina Anderson				
Kokys Scarth				
Jessica Johnson				
Gretchel Jackson				
Jola Holler				
Megan Gatlin	•			
Wanda Despain				
Annette Hall				
	r			
- ·				

# **Faculty**

Robert Andersen	James Fitzgerald	Leslie LeFevre
Russell Barney	Joseph Gubler	Laura Lojko
Sandy Barrett	Maria Hall	Melissa Rogers
Nathan Bowler	Jennie Hansen	Anne Sanders
Brent Dean	Charles Hardy	Darin Scholzen
Gordon Dotson	Stephanie Hayden	Charles Stuart
Cody Dupass	Sharon Jenks	Debra Thornton
Elaine Eckart	Jenica Juluson	Ryan Walker
Jack Eves	Fred Kulick	Heber White

#### HURRICANE MIDDLE SCHOOL

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

Improving Student Achievement

### **BELIEF STATEMENTS**

### We believe:

- Everyone has the right to a safe and nurturing environment.
- Communicating ideas effectively is a valuable life skill.
- Higher level thinking skills are essential to becoming literate.
- Effective work is the basis of all rewards.
- Curriculum and instructional practice should include a variety of learning and evaluating activities.
- Confidence is developed through preparation, achievement, and positive self concept.
- Life-long learning is an integral part of all education.
- Parental and community involvement in the education process are critical.
- Our school community fosters the values of respect, diversity, and trust.
- Assessment is a significant part of the learning process.

### DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

- 1. Reading Skills
  - Students will be able to access different types of reading materials effectively.
  - Students will read and comprehend written text.
- 2. Academic Growth
  - Students will be provided common assessments to encourage academic growth and improved student achievement.

## 3. Communication Skills

- Students will be able to organize written materials effectively using the Six Traits writing rubric.
- Students will present ideas and information using various forms of oral communication exercises supplemented with artistic skills.

Date of visit: April 2-3, 2008

## MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Catherine Jensen, Sunset Ridge Middle School, Jordan School District, Visiting Team Chairperson

Laurie Anderson, Tooele Junior High School, Tooele School District

Roseanne Markham, Granite School District

Kevin Pedersen, Canyon View High School, Iron County School District

#### VISITING TEAM REPORT

### **HURRICANE MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE** 

Located in the city of Hurricane Utah, Hurricane Middle School serves approximately 600 students in grades 8-9. The structure of the school has changed during the past few years from a 6-8 configuration to 8-9. The school has also recently implemented a block schedule. Another change occurred in the school leadership with a new principal being appointed at the beginning of the year. The school is populated from within very large geographic boundaries. Each of the small communities has a unique culture, which the students bring to the school. About 65 percent of the students come from the city of Hurricane.

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?

Significant findings from the school profile indicate that about 41 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch. About 87 percent of the students are reported as Caucasian. Special education students comprise 12.4 percent of the student population. Survey results indicate a general satisfaction with the school among all stakeholder groups.

*What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?* 

Testing data is very difficult to track at Hurricane Middle School due to the recent change in grade configuration. The Visiting Team recommends that a system be developed to track standardized testing data in order make comparisons with other similarly situated schools—and, more importantly, to track progress on SMART goals. The Visiting Team also recommends that the data be disaggregated. The Visiting Team met with the school "data miner," who had access to a great deal of school-generated data from interventions and common assessments. The Visiting Team commends this effort and suggests that this data be included in the self-study process and be made readily available to all stakeholder groups.

c) To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?

The school's self-study underreports the strengths of the school. The Visiting Team commends the school for its efforts on behalf of students that were "uncovered" during the visit. As the school stabilizes in the new grade configuration, the Visiting Team is confident that the school will develop a

method of keeping the profile comprehensive and accurate. The profile can then be used more effectively to guide the work of the school.

## **Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:**

- The Visiting Team suggests that Hurricane Middle School develop a system of tracking, reporting and distributing comparative data from standardized testing. This data should be disaggregated in order to answer the important questions of who is and who is not learning.
- The Visiting Team suggests continued use of school-generated data. It is suggested that this data be reported and distributed to all stakeholders. This could include discipline data, common assessment data, and grade distributions. Once a system of collection and distribution is in place, the school profile can guide the allocation of all resources based on data.

# CHAPTER 2: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

## Mission, Beliefs and Desired Results for Student Learning (DRSLs):

- a) To what degree were the school's mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs developed and/or revised collaboratively by the school community to define a compelling purpose and vision for the school and to support student achievement?
  - The school's mission statement, beliefs and DRSLs were reviewed two years ago, and revisions begun. The mission statement reflects a compelling purpose for the school, which is student learning. The Visiting Team commends the school for its collaborative culture. The administration and staff work well together to determine the work of the school. Parents have recently been included in the process. Parent groups report they appreciate the inclusion and feel they have a voice.
- b) To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's DRSLs?
  - The school's mission, beliefs and DRSLs are all aligned to support student learning.
- c) Describe the indicators (measures) that have been developed to assess the school's progress in assessing the DRSLs.

The school is in the process of developing indicators for student success on each of the DRSLs. Some are better developed than others. The Reading DRSL seems to have received a lot of attention in the form of assessments and interventions. The next steps will be to specifically describe intended outcomes with acceptable levels of performance and design instructional activities to help students gain those skills in each of the DRSLs.

d) To what extent do the school's mission, beliefs, and DRSLs guide the procedures, policies and decisions of the school, and appear evident in the culture of the school?

The mission, beliefs, and DRSLs seem to be quite new to the school. The previous self-study has not been used as a living document, and was not left as a road-map for the current administration. The work on the current self-study began about two years ago, essentially as a first study. The Visiting Team is confident that the current work on mission, beliefs and DRSLs is now ingrained in the culture of the school and will result in six years' worth of progress by the next full visit.

## **Curriculum:**

a) To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards, the Utah Core Curriculum, reflecting the Utah Life Skills: A Guide to Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions for Success?

The Visiting Team observed a dedication among departments to teaching the State Core. Teachers within departments meet once a week to ensure that students are receiving instruction based on the Utah State Core. Hurricane Middle School has support programs in place to ensure that students who are not performing to standard receive the opportunity to succeed. This includes programs through the resource department and a lunchtime remediation program.

b) To what extent does the curriculum engage **all** students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills?

The curriculum allows for a variety of teaching strategies that the Visiting Team observed within individual classrooms. Skills observed included:

- Collaborative learning activities.
- Poster board assignments.
- Jigsaw reading strategy.
- Simulation activities.
- Modeling and demonstrative teaching.

Departments are involved in professional development for content areas.

c) To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's DRSLs?

The curriculum is based on clearly defined standards that reflect worthwhile expectations for student learning.

Departments are continually mapping courses to ensure student learning. Teachers and staff members hold weekly faculty meetings. The DRSLs are posted in each classroom.

d) How does the staff use assessments to drive curriculum to ensure that **all** students can reach the intended learning outcomes?

Teachers use yearly CRT scores to ensure they are teaching to the State Core Standards. Weekly meetings are used to discuss academic progress of students. Teachers use UTIPS as a guide to help students prepare for year-end assessments.

## **Instruction:**

*a)* To what extent do teachers use a variety of instructional strategies to enhance student learning?

The current block system allows teachers to use a variety of teaching methods within a class period. Teachers were observed modeling different strategies during a class period. Students use a variety of collaborative learning techniques to demonstrate content learned.

Teachers use technology to supplement student instruction.

Teachers use weekly department or staff meetings to share new teaching strategies with each other.

b) To what extent have the school and the staff developed strategies for instruction that build the capacity for explicitly teaching the identified DRSL in every classroom?

There is an ongoing process at Hurricane Middle School to train teachers in the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) process. This will help ensure that students develop reading skills, experience academic growth, and use good communication skills.

The Visiting Team observed students completing both written and oral assignments, and participating in a variety of assessments that show their academic achievement.

c) To what extent is the school's professional development program guided by identified instructional needs, and how does it provide opportunities for teachers to develop and improve their instructional strategies that support student learning?

There is an ongoing emphasis on teachers becoming proficient in their content area. Hurricane Middle School makes every effort to provide support through district and state professional development classes and workshops.

With a new administration and block system, the school has adopted the PLC and is making efforts to train staff in this program.

d) To what extent are teachers proficient in their content area, knowledgeable about current research on effective instructional approaches, and reflective on their own practices?

Staff members are endorsed in their content areas. The district provides ongoing workshops and professional development for department needs. The staff uses the State Core to drive the curriculum.

e) To what extent does the school effectively implement a well-defined plan for the integration of technology into its curriculum, instruction, and assessments?

There are computers for student use in each classroom. Each teacher has access to an overhead projection system. Teachers are provided with microphones as needed.

Teachers and students have access to computers in the media center for research on the Internet, writing papers, and taking tests.

### **Assessment:**

a) To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments with performance standards based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?

Staff members at Hurricane Middle School have developed, and continue to finetune, common quarterly benchmark tests. They continue to meet regularly in Professional Learning Communities to more closely align their curricula and develop common formative assessments as well. The staff is highly committed to doing "whatever it takes" to support student achievement. b) To what extent does the school have a process to fairly and equitably assess school-wide and individual progress in achieving academic expectations?

Hurricane Middle School uses a variety of methods to gather data on student achievement. The quarterly benchmark assessments have opened the lines of communication between teachers on what is being taught, when it is to be taught, and best methods for teaching it. Many of the quarterly assessments are accessible on UTIPS, and teachers can then use the UTIPS reporting mechanism to look at item reliability, core mastery, problems in understanding, and information that need to be retaught. While this is a good first step, the Visiting Team recommends that teachers continue to develop other common assessments, both formative and summative, that align with the Core Curriculum so they can receive this feedback regularly throughout the quarter, rather than only at the end of the quarter. The Visiting Team also recommends that the administration continue to develop ongoing assessment tools to gather and disaggregate data on a regular basis for the school profile.

c) To what extent does the professional staff use data to assess the success of the school in achieving its academic expectations?

The professional staff meets weekly in PLCs, and part of the focus of these meetings is to create common assessments, evaluate student progress data, and align curricula both within and between departments. Based on data, the school has created a schedule that reflects the RtI model to support student learning, particularly in math and reading. The Visiting Team commends Hurricane Middle School for the work it is doing in this area. The Visiting Team recommends that Hurricane Middle School work to develop a variety of assessments, including performance- and application-based assessments, that allow students to demonstrate essential knowledge and skills in multiple ways. Opportunities for student self-assessment and reflection should also be provided on a regular basis.

d) To what extent does the school's professional development program allow for opportunities for teachers to collaborate in developing a broad range of student assessment strategies?

Hurricane Middle School has many structures in place that support professional development and collaboration. An on-site staff developer provides support for new teachers and other teachers who have questions on best practices. Teachers are given the opportunity to take "learning walks," allowing them to visit other teachers' classrooms and see the good work that is occurring throughout the school. PLCs are held weekly, during which teachers model best practices, develop common assessments, align curricula, examine student assessment data, work across curricula and departments, and participate in professional development. Washington School District also provides support for teachers who wish to participate in professional learning.

e) To what extent is there organizational agreement on the use of a school-wide scoring tool to assess the identified DRSL?

Hurricane Middle School does not have a school-wide scoring tool in place to assess the identified DRSL. The Visiting Team recommends that this be developed as an important next step during PLCs.

#### **CHAPTER 3: NAAS SUPPORT STANDARDS**

## **Leadership and Organization:**

a) To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate that actively supports teaching and learning?

The current school leadership is commended for its commitment to quality instruction through fostering an academic learning climate that actively supports teaching and learning. The school has embraced the Professional Learning Communities model. Progress is evident in the area of keeping learning the constant, with time and support as the variables.

b) To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative to monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness?

The changes in the structure and leadership of the school have made it difficult for the school to have viable data. The school is commended for its efforts to begin a process of effective data collection. The work of the school on the Professional Learning Communities model is research-based and focuses on collaboration. Professional development should continue to enhance the effectiveness of the collaboration and the implementation of effective instructional techniques.

c) To what extent does the leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and allocation and use of resources at the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment which aligns with the school goals, DRSLs, and school improvement?

The school leadership is new to the school, but shows a great commitment to the work of the school as defined by the self-study process. The Visiting Team is confident of the leadership's ability to allocate resources and manage the school to support the school goals, DRSLs, and continual school improvement.

d) To what extent does the school leadership empower the entire school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning through meaningful roles in the decision-making process?

The Visiting Team commends the school leadership for its efforts to include the entire school community in the activities of the school. Parent groups have recently been organized, with more parental involvement than in the recent past. Next steps would be to include the parents and community in the work of the focus groups and the ongoing school improvement process.

e) To what extent has the school established a formal system through which each student has an adult staff member who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school-wide expectations for student learning?

Some targeted students have an adult advocate who knows the student well. The comprehensive guidance program strives to provide this for each student. Next steps might include research and discussion around effective student advocacy programs. Tracking systems for individual student progress can then be developed to help the school achieve its mission of "Improving Student Achievement."

#### CHAPTER 4: NAAS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STANDARD

## **Culture of Continual Improvement:**

a) To what extent has the school developed and implemented a comprehensive school improvement plan using Collaborating for Student Achievement, the Utah accreditation/school improvement process that is reviewed and revised on an ongoing basis?

Hurricane Middle School has done an excellent job of developing and implementing a comprehensive school improvement plan using the accreditation/school improvement process. Because of multiple changes in the past six years, this year's school improvement plan is vastly different from that in place during the previous accreditation visit. The plan is focused and understandable, and teachers all seem to understand the process and the vision of their future. The school's organizational system and culture stress commitment to continuous improvement and professional development. Validated, research-based principles of high-performing schools serve as the primary focus of the content of professional development programs. The Visiting Team commends Hurricane Middle School for the clarity of this plan, and recommends that the school review and revise it on an ongoing basis to truly move the school forward.

It is also recommended that timelines for ongoing development of the plan be clarified and developed further.

b) To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through an aligned and ongoing professional development plan focused on the school's goals for improvement?

The school provides extensive training and support for its stakeholders to develop a deep understanding of the change process and its implications for the work of the school in its commitment to continuous improvement. An on-site staff developer helps teachers fine-tune their practice and implement new instructional strategies in their classrooms. The school administration is committed to change and improvement, and all stakeholders report strong support from them in this regard. Peer coaching takes place as teachers learn from each other. New teachers have opportunities to take "learning walks," in which they observe other teachers classrooms and discuss the best practices that were observed. While the school has undergone tremendous change in the past four years (four principals, as well as changes from 7-8 grade, then to 6-8, then to 8-9, and the change from a traditional to a block schedule this year), the teachers have a very positive attitude about change, and work to create change in themselves and their students. The Visiting Team commends Hurricane Middle School for its commitment to change, the many opportunities it provides for professional learning, and the strong administrative support for teachers.

c) To what extent is the new/revised school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up and is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?

The new school-wide action plan is focused on the critical components of communication skills, reading skills, and academic growth. The teachers and administration are passionate about this and committed to doing whatever it takes to help their students and teachers succeed. The plan is focused and achievable. The Visiting Team commends Hurricane Middle School for its clear action plan and obvious commitment to achieving it.

d) To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?

Hurricane Middle School is a model for continuous change and improvement. Despite all the major changes at the school in the past six years, teachers have "stayed the course" and continued the work to move the school forward and discover what is best for student achievement. The school made AYP in all subgroups for the first time last year as a result of its commitment to change and improvement, and teachers expect even better results this year. The administration has done an outstanding job of keeping the staff focused on student achievement and providing the infrastructure and support to allow change to happen. The

Visiting Team commends Hurricane Middle School for its school climate and support for change and growth.

e) What significant progress has been made in implementing the original action plan since the last full visit?

The Visiting Team finds that Hurricane Middle School has accomplished nearly all the goals from the action plan of six years ago. This is quite remarkable, given the huge amount of change the school has undergone in the past six years. While the school has accomplished these goals, many of them were accomplished in ways that were unanticipated six years ago. For example, one of the goals was to decrease the number of disruptions during the day. This has been accomplished by moving to block schedule (with only two passing times a day), moving homeroom to the lunch time, and revising the tardy policy. The Visiting Team commends Hurricane Middle School for its ability to move forward effectively in the midst of change.

f) What significant progress has the school made in addressing the **major** recommendations of the previous Visiting Team and/or review team?

The school has made significant progress in the past six years. The former Visiting Team recommended the following:

- Follow through with outlined plans and goals. As stated above, the school has accomplished nearly all the goals of its previous action plan.
- Give added focus on the needs of high achieving students. This area appears to be something that Hurricane Middle School could continue to work on. The focus of the school has primarily been on low achieving students, and because of this the school has seen growth in student achievement.
- Work at helping 6<sup>th</sup> graders feel safe and a part of the school. The school has moved to an 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade middle school, so this goal is no longer applicable.
- Increase efforts at relevant data collection using that data to drive decisions. Hurricane Middle School has made great strides in gathering data and using it to drive instructional decisions. The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue to develop tools to help in this important area.

## **CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING**

a) To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?

The Visiting Team saw evidence of positive and productive community fostered by Hurricane Middle School's students, staff, administration, and parents. The relationship between the administration and the faculty is mutually supportive and cohesive. Each of the stakeholder groups commented on the impact of cultivating positive relationships in well-being, and trust. The Visiting Team found that people liked being at Hurricane Middle School and felt that there was a strong sense of caring fostered by both faculty and staff. There is a strong climate of community and school pride demonstrated through parental involvement, administrative support, student connection, and staff dedication. These groups feel their contribution to Hurricane Middle School's environment is important and acted upon.

b) To what extent has the school engaged the school community in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?

Hurricane Middle School has implemented a number of activities that extend beyond the immediate structure of the school and involve community networking, which seems to nurture the school climate in a positive manner. There is a great amount of time spent on the Professional Learning Communities model. The model has been instituted from the district level, with Hurricane Middle School faculty meeting once a week after school with the intention of providing for further collaboration among faculty members and departments.

c) How are results of school improvement identified, documented, used, and communicated to **all** stakeholders?

The Visiting Team saw evidence of both student and parent surveys. The results of the surveys indicate that, in general, the community sees the school as open, friendly, and high functioning. The school has allocated resources for the support of a "data miner" who collects current data for review and assists the faculty in reviewing longitudinal data. The school has made efforts to revive the PTSA and support parental involvement. In addition, the Visiting Team heard testimonials that an established Community Council exists and is the forum for presenting new ideas and concerns. SEOP conferences are held twice a year, along with parent-teacher conferences. During the latter SEOP, the representatives from the high school meet with the ninth grade students and their parents.

# CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

## **Commendations:**

- The Visiting Team commends Hurricane Middle School for the commitment of its leadership and staff to student learning. This is indicated by the school's work on the Professional Learning Communities model and the "whatever it takes" attitude. The school mission statement reflects a dedication to student learning as the guiding force for the work of the school.
- The Visiting Team commends the leadership team for its vision and support of the staff. The team's members exhibit a willingness to take the next steps in this process.
- The Visiting Team commends the school for high academic expectations for all students, development of Power Standards, and the numerous interventions to keep learning as the constant, with time and support as the variables.
- The Visiting Team commends the school for its positive school climate. Students, parents, teachers, and support staff are satisfied with the school. There has been an increase in parental and community involvement in the school

### **Recommendations:**

- The Visiting Team recommends that Hurricane Middle School refine its data collection process and continue to develop the school profile. The team also recommends careful reflection with more attention to specific data. This profile will then be valuable in guiding the work of the school through transitions such as those that have recently occurred.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue its work with Professional Learning Communities. This work could include additional crosscurricular learning activities in order to provide rigor and relevance. Formative assessments can be developed in order to group and re-group students. Discussions can be facilitated around student work. The school can then accurately describe what learning the academic grades reflect and determine the value of learning activities.
- The Visiting Team recommends a dedication to the continuous school improvement process. The accreditation document should be updated yearly, with six years' worth of progress shown by the next full visit. The continual self-study process can then guide the work of the school and coordinate the efforts of the comprehensive school improvement plan and the School Land Trust Plan.

• The Visiting Team recommends that Hurricane Middle School take the next steps to refine the DRSLs by specifying expected levels of performance, developing formative and summative assessments and tracking of student progress. This may be best accomplished with the development of rubrics for each DRSL. This is generally addressed in the action plan.